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## Chapter One

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### *The Campground Village of Chaos*

My glow-in-the-dark watch stares at me. 3AM. A cacophony of sound pounds my ears. Banjos twang. Bongos and Tom-toms thump a beat. Tambourines jingle-jangle. Acoustic guitars sing a melody. Tribal chants and human claps tumble from another world. I unzip the window flap of my tent. I can't believe what I see.

Clusters of people mill about in all directions, like a band of gypsies on a caffeine high. A campground village is taking shape in Lake Minnawanna Park. Bonfires flame everywhere. Each campsite overflows with humanity. People clog all the roads. Engines rev. Car doors open and close. Headlights and brake lights flash. Music and voices fill the air.

I gaze out my tent window taking in all the changing scenes of organized chaos—fire-pits rage at each site as far as I can see. Tall shadows of bodies bob against the forested background. Chanting drums beat to a hypnotic Native American tribal dance. I slip into a trance taking it all in. I glance at my watch, 3:30AM laughs at me like a clown in a circus. Friendly, harmonious, total chaos explodes in the park through my waking dreams.

## *The Bohemian Adventure*

When I retired to bed for the evening and the last embers of my campfire fell into the pit—the night was quiet, serene and peaceful. I felt alone in semi-solitude. Only two other occupied campsites existed in the whole back half of the park. The light of their campfires glowed around the bend in the road. The quiet night breeze rustled the hickory and oak tree branches overhead in the quarter-moonlight. Nature holds the secret to my inward peace and serenity.



Wide awake, I intend to get up to walk about and find out what's going on. Bright headlights illuminate my tent. *Neighbors.*

I hurry to get dressed, fumbling around for a shirt and some shorts to put on. Unzipping the tent, a little six-by-six pup tent, I back out, right leg first, using both hands and my left knee for support. My right foot grazes, touches something. Startling, I fall forward into my sleeping bag in the tent.

Then I hear a voice.

"Excuse me. I'm sorry. Excuse me. We didn't think anyone was camping here tonight because you have no car. We're right next door and we'll have at least twenty people or more, five or six small tents. You don't mind if we go over your property line do you?"

I huddle inside my tent, peeking out the flap, as he continues.

"I'm going to park my VW right on the edge so we have room on the other side. I'm Jeff. What's your name? We're deadheads!"



I exit the tent, stand up and face him to introduce myself. "I'm Ted. Ted Senario." We shake hands.

"It's great to meet you, Ted. Me and my brethren are

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deadheads," he laughs, making air quotes as he continues, "We've come here following the Grateful Dead on tour."

I pause for the moment and look around at all the activity. It's not yet the dawning of sunrise. However, the whole park as far as I can see is bustling with peopled energy. Every campsite, fire ring, picnic table, vehicle and tent is buzzing with a symphony of sounds, motion, light, smoke.

Jeff speaks up. "I'm from Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston."

He wears a perpetual smile with his short red-top mop of hair on his medium-built frame. Jeff is thin and wiry. Muscled.

*Five-foot-seven, a hundred thirty-five pounds?*

He wears real thin braids with multi-colored material woven within, extending off one side of his head and down his back, where, at the end, several of these braids come together separately and are tied into a big colorful red, white, and blue ball. Jeff twirls the hair ball around and back and forth from each hand as he talks.

"I'm a college student on a summer vacation adventure. I sell devil sticks at the shows. Come on over to my site and I'll introduce you to some of the people I'm hanging with."

Jeff is all excited. Wound tight. Intense. Wired. He paces back and forth, hands in and out of his pants pockets, then back to twirling the braided ball in his hair.

I hesitate for a few seconds. "Sure man," I say with a wary sense of caution. "Lead the way."

During this brief introduction with Jeff, two flower-decaled VW mini-bus vans back in and park end to end in the campsite next to mine. They come to a stop less than two feet from my tent, serving as a wall, partitioning off my site from all the activities on the other side of the vehicles.

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I follow Jeff around the other side of the VW's and here we are at a gathering. Happy mellow faces everywhere—tie-dyed shirts on just about everyone of the two dozen or so at Jeff's campsite. I meet John and Pete, Ann, Jane, another Jeff, another Pete, Judy, Carol, Lisa, Bob, Kent, Lois, Janelle, Ron, Betty, Trent, Joe, Lynn . . .

Everybody is from a different part of the country: Massachusetts, New York, California, Oregon, Colorado, Iowa, Alabama, Georgia, Maine, and Kentucky. I meet a couple from England, two guys from Spain, one guy from Germany, and a female—on student exchange—from Christ Church, New Zealand. Most of the people seem to be in their early twenty's, late teens—college students, I presume.

Pete is sitting on the edge of the picnic table by the campfire playing a banjo. He wears picks on each of his fingers and he moves them fast in a rhythm, a unison of perpetual motion, creating a blue-grass folksy sound. Jeff sat on the other side of the picnic table with a pair of bongos. He keeps the beat to Pete's banjo. Then Lynn joins in with a harmonica. Somebody offers me a beer. I stand by the campfire and watch them play.

John joins in with an acoustic guitar and they have a full band going now. The rest of the people start dancing, one-by-one, in a circle around the campfire. This is unlike any kind of dancing I've ever seen. It looks like the kind of thing you would imagine a three or four-year old doing.

*Not full-fledged common-sense adults.*

But common sense doesn't reign here—only the uncommon, unconventional sense of things. I watch in rapt attention with my right hand hugging my beer can. I take a sip. They move their arms and hands and fingers as if they are riding a wave.

*The rhythmic frequency wave of the music creates a psychic connection?*

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I don't know. Very strange. Space cadets.

This spectacle I'm witnessing bewilders me. The dancers start hopping and skipping and twirling—like ballet or something—all the while still doing that wavy thing with their upper body. Each person is doing their own individual wavy twirl dance routine. Eyes often closed. Souls blissfully oblivious, lost in the freedom of the moment.

I stand transfixed, just observing the surroundings.

Soon it will be sunrise. The night delivers me into a day of a waking fantasy-like dream.



Thank you for reading the sample of THE BOHEMIAN ADVENTURE: A Voyage to Free Consciousness by author F.T. Burke

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